



STATE OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
Ellington Agricultural Center, P.O. Box 40627, Nashville, TN 37204
(615) 837-5160 • FAX (615) 837-5194
www.PickTnProducts.org

Julius Johnson, Commissioner

Joe R. Gaines, Assistant Commissioner

April 5, 2011

To: Tennessee Specialty Crop Colleagues

The United States Department of Agriculture recently announced the availability of grant funds to State Departments of Agriculture. **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program-Farm Bill** funds are authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill). The purpose of these funds is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, which are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, and nursery crops including floriculture. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture will assume the lead role concerning the funds available for our state. We will be accepting proposals in three main categories.

Universities, institutions, cooperatives, producers, industry or community-based organizations may submit a proposal for project funding. Project categories can be found on the following page and at www.state.tn.us/agriculture/marketing/produce.html. Projects must impact multiple Tennessee producers. The purpose is for projects that are forward thinking and will have a positive impact on Tennessee Agriculture. To submit your proposal, please follow the directions and criteria set forth by USDA (Attached) and at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp. **Proposals must be received by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture no later than June 15, 2011.**

Submitted proposals must demonstrate significant potential for increasing Tennessee farm income through the improvement or expansion of farm or agribusiness operations involving the production of specialty crop products. Demonstration of long-term benefits is also required. We will review each proposal received and rank them according to the criteria provided. A panel or review committee will notify you by June 29, 2011 if we intend to include your project in Tennessee's proposal to USDA.

Questions concerning this initiative can be directed to Dan Strasser at 615-837-5160 or Dan.Strasser@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

Dan Strasser
Director of Market Development

DS/jl

Attachment



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Specialty Crop Block Grant – Farm Bill 2011 Request for Proposals

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture announces the availability of federally funded grants to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, nursery crops (including floriculture). SCBGP–FB funds are authorized by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill). The Farm Bill requires USDA to obligate the grant funds under this program by the end of this federal fiscal year, September 30, 2011, which necessitates a short application period.

PROPOSAL CATEGORIES:

Good Ag Practices/ Food Safety/ Traceability

\$50,000 max per proposal

This category could include but is not limited to training, specialized equipment and facilities needed to incorporate GAPs, GMPs and/or specialty crop traceability.

Farmers Markets/ Wholesale Produce

\$50,000 max per proposal

This category could include but is not limited to cool storage, distribution and handling needs. One priority of this category is the establishment of wholesale produce auctions.

Innovative Specialty Crop Projects

\$50,000 max per proposal

This category could include but is not limited to on-farm needs that enhance marketing, production, packing and/or distribution of specialty crops.

Ineligible items in every category include software, general equipment and motorized vehicles. The goal is to build Tennessee farm income with tangible projects that have a lasting impact. Therefore, completely research projects will not be considered. Projects must impact multiple Tennessee producers.

Universities, institutions, cooperatives, producers, industry or community-based organizations can submit a proposal in the above categories.

PROPOSAL INFORMATION:

To be eligible for a grant, proposals will entail one plan to show how grant funds will be utilized solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The plan **must** include the following:

- (1) **Cover page** complete with organization name, contact information, tax ID # and contact person.
- (2) **Project title and abstract.** Include the title of the project and an abstract of 200 or fewer words.
- (3) **Project purpose.** Clearly state the purpose of the project. Describe the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed. Explain why the project is important and timely. If funding is being directed at a marketing program, describe how the awardees will ensure that funding is being used solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Indicate if the project will be or has been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program.
- (4) **Potential impact.** Discuss the number of people or operations affected, the intended beneficiaries of each project, and/or potential economic impact if such data are available and relevant to the project.
- (5) **Expected Measurable Outcomes.** For each project, describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome-oriented objective that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose. Outcome measures may be long that exceed the grant period. Describe how performance toward meeting outcomes will be monitored. For each project, include a performance monitoring plan to describe the process of collecting and analyzing data to meet the outcome-oriented objectives.
- (6) **Work Plan.** For each project, explain briefly the activities that will be performed to accomplish the objectives of the project. Be clear about who will do the work. Include appropriate time lines.
- (7) **Budget Information**—showing the complete budget for each project including the investment committed from your business/organization and any other partners.
- (8) **Project Oversight.** Describe the oversight practices that provide sufficient knowledge of grant activities to ensure proper and efficient administration for each project.
- (9) **Project Commitment.** Describe how all grant partners commit to and work toward the goals and outcome measures of each proposed project(s).

Your proposal does not need to exceed 4-5 pages. The grant period runs from October 1, 2011-September 30, 2013. Quarterly reports will be required (on funds used during that quarter). All applicants should review the USDA rules and procedures at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp Applicant must be in good standing with Federal Government and therefore not excluded from grant opportunity. Those listed on Excluded Parties List at www.epls.gov are not eligible.

ADDRESSES: Send proposals by **EMAIL** to: Dan.Strasser@tn.gov

If you do not receive a confirmation email within 3 days of submission, please call 615-837-5298 to ensure it was received.

DATES: Proposals must be received no later than **June 15, 2011**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS CONTACT:

Dan Strasser

Phone: (615) 837-5298, email: Dan.Strasser@tn.gov

Examples of Ineligible items

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

- ***Alcoholic beverages*** except when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of wine grapes and prior approval is given from the awarding agency.
- ***Bad debts.*** Including losses (whether actual or estimated) arising from uncollectable accounts and other claims, related collection costs, and related legal costs.
- ***Capital Expenditures for General Purpose Equipment.*** Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land. “General purpose equipment” means equipment, which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.
- ***Contingency Provisions.*** Contributions to a contingency reserve or any similar provision made for events the occurrence of which cannot be foretold with certainty as to time, intensity, or with an assurance of their happening.
- ***Entertainment.*** Amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities).
- ***Excessive Airfare Costs.*** Airfare costs in excess of the customary standard commercial airfare (coach or equivalent), Federal Government contract airfare, or the lowest commercial discount airfare.
- ***Fundraising.*** Organized fund raising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used.
- ***Lobbying.*** Development or participation in lobbying activities including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying.
- ***Political Activities.*** Development or participation in political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7324-7326).
- ***Replacement of funds.*** Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of your organization’s funds in support of specialty crops grown in Tennessee, rather than replace funds.

OTHER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Producers may apply for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) cost share. Several categories including Producer Diversification, Livestock Equipment and Hay Storage hold opportunities for funds. Learn more at <http://www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/enhancement/index.html>.

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products) should see the USDA energy Web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/rus/index2/0208/EnergyPrograms.htm>.

Also, agricultural cooperatives, producer networks, producer associations, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public health corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers’ market authorities and tribal governments that are interested in submitting projects that support farmers’ markets that do not solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops should visit the Farmers’ Market Promotion Program (FMPP) Web site at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp>.

Only state departments of agriculture specifically named under the authorizing legislation should assume the lead role in SCBGP–FB projects, and use cooperative or contractual linkages with other agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry or community-based organizations as appropriate. Therefore do not apply directly to USDA. Rather submit a proposal for consideration to The Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) at the address listed above.

Timeline for proposals & Funding

- **June 15, 2011- All project proposals received by TDA**
- **June 29, 2011- TDA announces projects to be included in State application to USDA**
- **July 13 2011- TDA submits plan to USDA-some modifications on your proposals could be required based on USDA feedback**
- **October 1, 2011- Federal funds become available. TDA will contact with sub-recipients. Quarterly reports on funds used must be submitted to TDA**
- **September 30, 2013-Grant period ends. All funds must be used by this date.**

All applicants should review the USDA rules and procedures at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp. Examples of acceptable submitted projects can be found at this site.